



## Concept paper

The executive and members of AEMRN Netherlands and AEMRN Switzerland will be holding their Annual AEMRN Symposium.

Theme: “Community Systems Strengthening and Malaria Control”

Place: Amsterdam RAI Conference Centre, The Netherlands

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2009



## **Introduction of the Afro-European Medical and Research Network**

The Afro-European Medical and Research Network (AEMRN) is a non-governmental and not for profit organisation with a strong vision of helping to improve the quality of life for people living in low-income countries especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

This vision includes AEMRN serving as a network where active professionals from medicine and allied professions can interact through organised symposia and conferences to promote the exchange of skills, experiences and expertise for addressing challenging issues such as malaria in hard to reach communities in low-income countries.

We also use simple low resolution technology to link communities across countries willing to learn from each other and share their knowledge so that together we can address our challenges and improve the work that we do in these communities.

AEMRN members strive to contribute their knowledge and experience to improve the quality of their work so that the communities they interact with benefit from improved performance irrespective of race, creed, beliefs, faith and social affiliation.

### **Malaria symposium background**

Malaria caused by a parasite called Plasmodium is transmitted via the bites of infected Anopheles female mosquitoes. In the human body, the parasites multiply in the liver, and then infect red blood cells eventually producing the sign and symptoms of malaria.

The Plasmodium falciparum is the predominant cause of severe malaria accounting for more than 90% of all malaria infections.

However, there are occasional occurrences of mixed infections with P. Malariae and P.Ovale. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 3.3 billion people - half of the world's population - are at risk of malaria leading to about 250 million malaria cases and nearly one million deaths yearly.

People living in the poorest countries are the most vulnerable.

Malaria is especially a serious problem in Africa, where one in every five (20%) childhood deaths is due to the effects of the disease. An African child has on average between 1.6 and 5.4 episodes of malaria fever each year and every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria.

Thus the symposium on “Community Systems Strengthening and Malaria Control” is in line with AEMRN annual programme of organising one conference and one symposium annually to physically bring our members and other stakeholders to share experiences on topics of common interest.

The first symposium organised on the topic “*Knowledge Management, Resource Mobilisation and sustained HIV/AIDS Research in Low-income Countries - Case of Sub-Saharan Africa*” on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 in Bern Switzerland was well attended and a great success.

Our 2009 Spring Conference on “*Strategies in Mobilising Resources*” with specific focus on “*Sharing Knowledge and Mobilising action to support Projects in Low Income Countries*” held on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2009 at United Nations Palais des Nations, in Geneva brought together diverse professionals and we had very positive outcomes.

At the symposium in Amsterdam, we will bring together again our colleagues very active in the efforts to control malaria from communities around the world especially from Africa.

As a team guided by carefully chosen facilitators, we will explore, exchange and share experiences and research outcomes of innovative ways we can effectively strengthen our various communities to control malaria.

## **Target Audience**

The symposium will bring together stakeholders active in the field of malaria control such as:

- Healthcare professionals from highly endemic countries especially Sub-Saharan Africa
- Community based organisations (CBOs) from low-income countries
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- Members of International organisations
- Migrant population from low-income countries including frequent flyers to these countries.
- Participants from countries in Africa, West and Eastern Europe, USA, Canada, Asia and Latin America.
- Various pressure groups and opinion leaders including community leaders.
- University students and students from other institutions and youth organisation socio-cultural clubs.
- Embassy representatives especially sub-Saharan Africa.
- Humanitarian organisations and professional bodies having interest or dealing with malaria control in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Expected outcomes**

- The stakeholders from Sub-Saharan Africa after exchanging and sharing of knowledge and experiences with colleagues from other part of the world recognise the importance of strengthening their communities in effectively controlling malaria through innovative means.
- The participants accept the need for a greater focus on communities and people themselves as a key component of community system strengthening and as the foundation for effective, sustainable malaria control.
- Participants appreciate the need for community members to understand the malaria control targets set out in the Global Malaria Action Plan5 (GMAP) to ensure universal access of people at risk to prevention and relate it to there various communities.

- The stakeholders as participants will be helped to map out strategies for community-owned response which motivates behaviour change by stimulating community dialogue about malaria during which communities can assess their own malaria situation and come up with relevant solutions.
- Facilitate the continuous professional development in malaria control and the training of community-based service providers to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage febrile illness or malaria.
- Participants to promote and encourage positive health practices with regards to malaria control in the communities and seek synergies with other communities.
- Help secure full commitment and support of policy by decision makers and other relevant stakeholders
- Help facilitate resource mobilization for malaria control initiatives.
- Share with one another and provide the necessary scientific evidence for timely decision making to improve services provided based on research.

## **Justification**

- Achieving the above goals in strengthening community systems to effectively control malaria needs effective team work to mobilise individuals across the world to share our common vision hence the symposium provides an excellent platform and opportunity.
- Together we can through sharing knowledge strive to make a difference and complement the efforts of institutions active in malaria control.
- We can acknowledge our successes and debate our challenges with colleagues directly from the fields in the various communities as together we are a powerful force for change, but at the same time we must find and share existing knowledge and resources.

## **Methodology**

### **First day**

The meeting will be opened by the chairperson and then addresses lead by the Rollback Malaria Secretariat.

Papers will then be presented from participants.

The day will end with a plenary session that will draw summaries from the day's presentations discussions

## **Second day**

The day will start with more presentations.

These combined with presentations from the previous day will set the forum for a brain storming session in which participants will work in three groups to share what they are currently doing to support community systems strengthening in the control of malaria.

Participants will use this discussion as an opportunity to identify possibly synergies and challenges that could help each other to enhance their activities.

There will be a feedback session during which various points from the three groups will be collated during a plenary feedback session.

Key issues and activities will be prioritized and recommendations for continuing the initiative of community systems strengthening after the symposium discussed.

The venue and topic of symposium for next year will be discussed.

## **Documentation and sharing of outcome from symposium**

The secretariat will prepare the final strategy, highlights and recommendations of the symposium, which will be shared with all participants.